Chapter 21

How to make a policy brief that has real impact

Have you ever wondered if the policy briefs you've produced actually made a difference? There are many guides that will tell you how to write an effective policy brief, but is the wording and design what makes the difference? Well, partly. If you want to make an impact, writing the brief is just a small part of the work. A policy brief is only worth what you do with it.

If you want to take a relational approach to developing your next policy brief, you need to consider how you engage members of the policy community in your design and planning, writing, distribution and longer-term engagement.

1. Design and planning

Ask yourself the following questions to put policy-makers at the heart of your design and planning:

1. **Who is the policy-maker?** This is important because it determines the target group of the policy brief. Are you targeting people within specific government agencies, who are likely to have a relatively focused interest in the topic, with a relatively high degree of technical competence? In this case, you will need to include some of the technical detail, so that these specialists can make up their own mind about the credibility of your work. Or are you briefing policy analysts within government departments who advise ministers, or the MPs and ministers themselves? In this case, your policy brief should be much shorter, with far less technical detail and much simpler language.
2. **When are they likely to read a policy brief?** This might determine when and how and in what format to distribute the brief (e.g. electronic or paper version, when to schedule the email with the brief attached, such as an evening, even on weekends, will it be read over breakfast or on a train/flight?)
3. **How much time do they have to brief themselves on the latest research?** This is crucial for deciding the length of the 'brief'. If you are a high-ranking politician, you may only want to read a single page. Others might spend up to 30–60 minutes to get a more

detailed picture of the research behind your recommendations. One approach is to do a 'breakfast test': can your policy brief be read and understood in the length of time it takes to drink a coffee over breakfast?

4. **Why should they pick up the policy brief in the first place?** What is likely to grab their attention? How can you make it visually attractive, with a heading that is of interest? What sort of 'strapline' or 'teaser', perhaps based on a key finding, might encourage the politician to read it?
5. **What do they want to know?** What are the most pressing, wider policy issues? Can you link to important and current policy questions and issues? If your work is only one small contribution to a wider issue, can you collaborate with other researchers working in the same area to create a policy brief that includes your research, but that is likely to be perceived as having greater political significance? Is now the right time to put out your policy brief if there are other major issues swamping the policy agenda in your area?
6. **Is this compatible with their overarching goals and ideology as a policy-maker?** Many policy-makers are looking for research that furthers their own agenda and legitimises their views and ideology. They are unlikely to change these fundamental values and beliefs on the basis of one policy brief, so make sure you phrase your recommendations carefully to avoid provoking a negative reaction based on a presumption of ideological incompatibility. This doesn't mean you need to make political recommendations or change your findings to fit the views of politicians — far from it. It is surprising, however, how far you can adapt the way in which you communicate your findings to make them attractive to different policy actors without altering the research in any way.
7. **What reason do they have to trust you?** What indicators can quickly reassure a policy-maker with limited time that you are knowledgeable and credible enough to deliver the message? If you do not have a high profile yourself, what indicators of esteem might make them trust you by proxy, such as your institutional affiliation, the badge of your research funder or more senior academic mentors and supervisors who helped you write the brief?
8. **Are there clear and actionable things they can do as a result of reading this?** Is the evidence you provide aligned with the policy problem that the policy-maker needs to address? Can you provide solutions to these problems? Are your recommendations SMART

(specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound)? Can you make it even SMARTER i.e. 'effective' (e.g. cost-effective) and therefore more 'realistic'?

2. Writing and stress-testing

Now you have put yourself, effectively, in the shoes of your policy audience, you need to ask yourself:

- What would you personally like to get across?
- What's your own aim for the policy brief?
- Does that match the policy-maker's perspective?

If your answer to the last question is "no", you should stop right there, otherwise you might be wasting your time.

If, however, you have been able to align your aims with the needs of policy-makers, it is now time to write the brief. With the help of the questions above, you will already have decided on length, style and language. You are using common terms without too much jargon, and avoiding (or, if you can't, spelling out) acronyms. You are telling a convincing story about why change is needed.

How to set up the brief itself?

On the front page you'll need:

- **Title:** keep it short and powerful — would you personally pick up a policy brief with such a title? You can consider adding a subtitle, if it further explains your main message (again keep it short).
- **Teaser**: start with a summary of the brief's content and its relevance in two to three sentences (maximum five lines), state all the main points and repeat them throughout the document.
- **Recommendations:** in bulletpoints, perhaps use a sidebar or box.
- **Picture/photograph:** something attractive and positive that captures the research topic well. Make your picture bigger and have less text if possible.

On the next pages, consider the following:

- **Overview:** give a brief overview and state the problem or objective. Embed your research in an important, current issue and explain how the policy brief contributes to that issue and provides useful answers.

- **Introduction:** summarise the issue, explain the context (including the political) to explain why the topic is so important and how your research can help to solve/improve the situation. Pinpoint gaps in current policy, link to crisis points that may be windows of opportunity in which new policies may be looked for. Outline a brief history or background, but only if it is relevant to the theme (otherwise leave it out!).
- **Research findings:** these are the answers from your research that help to solve the problem (other findings may be of interest to researchers and might look pretty on a graph, but if they don't help address the policy issue, cut them out). If possible, present your findings in a more visual, clear style, so the idea can be grasped immediately. Include research evidence from the literature and other sources to support your own findings in plain language. Use subheadings to break up blocks of text (keep sections of text and paragraphs as short as possible). Any graphs or other figures should be simple, and be labelled with a short description that can be understood without reading the text.
- **Sidebars and boxes:** highlight the most important evidence in sidebars or boxes, so people can easily skim through the key points if they are in a hurry (remember these are for highlighting important things, not for unimportant things, to policy-makers at least, like definitions).
- **White space and photographs:** try and break up your text with plenty of white space and photographs to avoid intimidating readers and also to make your work more attractive to engage with. If you can, hire a professional designer to help with this. If there's not enough room to fit everything in that you want, don't make the font size smaller or cut white space and images — cut down your material (the next stage in the process, the feedback loop, will help with this if you're struggling to work out what you can cut).
- **Additional sources:** more (background) information, more detail on the topic, maximum four further sources, including peer-reviewed material by you and your team

Last page:

- Brief summary statement, concluding with the **take-home message**
- **Policy recommendations:** clear recommendations aimed at a specific policy sector (or sectors) and specific live policy issues, in bullet points, stating why these options are recommended

- **Author's contact details:** including current position, associated institute and funder (remember the credibility issue), Twitter accounts (for key project staff and the project itself if this account exists), websites etc.
- **Acknowledgements:** if necessary (e.g. your funder)
- **Sources:** cite in footnotes, if needed

Stress-testing

If you want to take a relational approach to developing your policy brief, the next step is to stress-test it. I usually move from low to high stress-testing, starting by sending a draft of my policy brief to trusted colleagues who have not been involved in its production, before sending to members of the policy community who I think are likely to hold very different views on the issues I'm writing about:

- **Academic content:** I will start by stress-testing my content with other researchers. Do they agree with my interpretation of the evidence? Have I missed any important evidence? Could I communicate uncertainty more effectively?
- **Design:** if I have designed it myself, I will send it to a few friendly colleagues for comment on the layout and selection of photos.
- **Language:** I will send it to a science communication specialist or a non-academic friend to get feedback on my choice of language. If they cannot understand my message, then I will try and rewrite it. If I am aiming for EU policy-makers (most of whom are non-English native speakers), I try to give my draft to non-native English-speaking friends for feedback. Alternatively, identify jargon using the Up Goer Six website (http://www.splasho.com/upgoer6/), a text editor that colour codes all words according to how common they are.
- **Messaging:** finally, I will seek feedback on how the evidence-based messages in my policy brief are coming across to different audiences within the policy community. For a controversial topic, I will specifically seek opinions from people who I know hold opposing views. What are the weaknesses and limitations? If you were in a debate with me, what holes would you pick in my argument? Based on this, I can now predict some of the objections that might arise when I start trying to communicate my message more widely. In some cases there is little I can do to make my message resonate with different sides of the debate, but at least I know some of the questions I am likely to get. However, in other cases, it is possible to plug gaps and strengthen or

reframe arguments. If a fundamental flaw in your argument is revealed, or you are pointed to contradictory evidence, you have time to correct your mistakes.

3. Distribution

How should you distribute your policy brief? The options are growing rapidly:

- **Electronically:** first you might upload your brand new policy brief to your own and your department/organisation's website. This will provide you with a link to a PDF of the brief that you can include in emails that you send out to your target group.
- **Hardcopy:** sending a 'paper' version to your target audience is important. Do not just send to a department, but make it personal and send it directly to a person. Even better, you can hand over your brief in person to the policy-maker in a face-to- face meeting (be it over lunch, at a conference, during their 'office hours' — this might depend on your previous attempts to start a relationship with your target audience).
- **Social media and beyond:** use the PDF link you created for all social media that you have set up personally and within your team, organisation, department or institution. That may (for example) include Twitter, ResearchGate, LinkedIn and even Facebook. Use a picture/photo of the cover (or key photo) of the brief to accompany distribution via social media as this attracts people and increases the likelihood of further distribution by sharing (liking, retweeting etc.) by others in your network. Make sure your profile on social media is consistent with your role as an expert in the field, with a link to your institution or a webpage that clearly links to it. The more times your target audience comes into contact with your material via different channels and people in their network, the more likely they are to perceive that it must be worth engaging with. For this reason, you might also ask your PR department if they can publish a press release (together with the original research paper/research on which the brief is based) on Twitter and so on. Furthermore, consider writing a blog post about the brief that includes the recommendations, and distribute it through the channels mentioned above.

4. Engagement and impact

Follow up the email to your targeted people with a phone call. Ask if any further information is needed. Propose a lunchtime meeting or seminar to discuss your research further. Make sure the brief remains in the memory of your target group beyond the mere picking up and reading of it. You can also invite them to related conferences and workshops and take a copy of the brief with you to any of these events. Remember that one-way information flows are unlikely to get anyone to act on your recommendations.

If you are not likely to meet the target of your policy brief any time soon, you might start following them via Twitter (as mentioned earlier, lots of policy-makers are active on this platform nowadays) or subscribe to email lists to know what they are up to and to learn where your work fits in with and contributes towards their agenda. Take the time to find out what they think, what sort of language they use, what is on their agenda and how you can help them with their daily tasks. And when you have the chance to meet them, your connection via social media will make it easier to build trust.

Perhaps you will find forming trusting relationships so fruitful that you decide to co-produce the policy briefs in collaboration with the people who will use it. This is a particularly effective way to develop the policy brief according to their needs and will ensure that it is used and result in impact.

To be able to achieve impact, the best-case scenario is that you already have a long-lasting, trusting relationship with relevant policy-makers. But it is not too late; you can start now. Find out which events they are likely to attend, and look up photographs of them, so that you can identify them during breaks to introduce yourself to them and get to know them. Policy-makers are just people like us. If you find it difficult to start small talk by yourself, ask colleagues to help. They may already be trusted by the policy- maker and may be able to introduce you to them. Some of this trust will make your initial contact more trustworthy too.

Examples

Finally, I'd like to show you a few examples of policy briefs that I think are particularly good. The first was developed by Julia McMorrow from the University of Manchester, and is notable because it led to concrete changes in government policy. It raised cross-sector awareness of wildfire and helped make the case for severe wildfire to be included for the first time on the National Risk Register in 2013. The Chair of the Chief Fire Officers Wildfire Group commented:

“Such was the quality of the Policy Brief, that I used it to raise the awareness of wildfire issues affecting UK Fire and Rescue Services by circulating it to all Chief Fire Officers... The work is as relevant now as it was when first produced in 2010. The FIRES Policy Brief also formed a cornerstone of the Wildfire Group’s initial Action Plan.”

FIRES

Fire Interdisciplinary Research on Ecosystem Services:
Fire and Climate Change in UK Moorlands and Heaths

POLICY BRIEF

KEY MESSAGES

1. **The UK has an under-reported wildfire problem;** an improved evidence base is needed.
2. **Wildfire risk and its causes vary over the UK;** Wildfires are started by humans   accidentally by recreational visitors, transport and escaped managed fires, and maliciously by arsonists. We need to know more about the UK fire regime (date, intensity, duration, size and location and type of vegetation fires) – and how this is changing.
3. **Managed fires and wildfires are linked,** together determining fire regime. Managed fires can reduce wildfire risk by controlling fuel load, but escaped fires can become wildfires.
4. **The impact of fire on ecosystem services is contested.** It varies with fire regime. Severe wildfire should be recognised as an ecosystem disservice, especially in peatlands. Cross-sector cooperation is required to avoid well-intentioned management unwittingly increasing wildfire risk.
5. **Fires are costly to put out, and have long-term cost implications for ecosystem services.** Treating ecosystem services as property assets would allow the costs of suppressing wildfires to be set against the avoided costs of damage to these services.
6. **There are three main challenges to future management** of wildfire risk on moorlands and heaths ; land and recreation management and the effects of climate change.
7. **Wildfire management needs combined strategies** of fire suppression, prevention and protection of ecosystem services, including fuel and risk reduction.
8. **Specialist equipment, training, models and forecasting tools** are needed.
9. **Research and knowledge exchange** on wildfire need to be supported.
10. **Partnership working is an effective and efficient approach** to address the wildfire problem.

Figure 1: *Wildfires on the UK, 18 April 2003. Red dots mark the location of active fires detected by the MODIS satellite. Smoke plumes from large moorland fires can be seen. (NASA/University of Maryland[1])*

FIRES Seminar Series

The FIRES seminar series discussed the key but equivocal role of prescribed fire and wildfire, and the many controversies for management and policy making. Four seminars were held in 2008/9 on the effects of moorland and heathland fires on ecosystem services in the UK. The series was funded jointly by ESRC and NERC as part of their transdisciplinary series on ecosystem services. Other sponsors included Scottish Natural Heritage, Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, and the Peak District National Park Authority. Over 130 different people attended; the majority were practitioners. Demand exceeded ESRC/NERC funded places by over 70%.

The environmental, social and cultural ecosystem services provided by moorlands and heathlands include carbon capture and storage (especially on peatland), biodiversity, water provision, flood protection, aesthetic/recreational value, and economic value from tourism, sporting enterprises, forestry and grazing. Fire is historically important in shaping moorland and heathland landscapes. Managed rotational burning is used to maintain heather moors for grouse and grazing animals. Its effect on ecosystem services is contested. Wildfire is accidental or malicious vegetation fire. Severe wildfire increasingly threatens ecosystem services.

This document expands on the key messages from the series, makes policy recommendations and identifies knowledge gaps.

The policy brief recommended better fire reporting and as a result Julia was invited to work with the Fire Service to evaluate how satellite data and their Incident Recording System could be used to understand national and regional wildfire distribution. The joint research developed criteria to differentiate 'wildfires' from other less significant vegetation fires and recommended ways to improve reporting. The definition was used in the Scottish Government's WildfireOperationalGuidance. Theworkhasalsobeenusedasan example to influence wildfire policy in Ireland. Julia was invited to join the England and Wales Wildfire Forum, the Fire and Statistics User Group and other national and regional stakeholder groups.

I asked Julia what she thought had made it such an effective policy brief, and she explained the long path that she and her colleagues took to develop it. First, she organised a series of seminars, to which she invited all the key stakeholders who were affected by the issues she and others were researching. Part of this was about presenting and discussing her research findings, but it was also about understanding how different stakeholders perceived the research, and appreciating their knowledge of the issues too. She ensured that the steering group of the seminar series was composed equally of practitioners and researchers. They jointly took the policy brief forward, deciding on the language to be used, and the framing of the key messages, ensuring all the time that it remained based firmly on the seminars' findings. Part of the group was an organisation who had already run a successful series of briefing notes on related topics, so their design template was used to reach their existing audience and make it as widely accessible as possible. Julia explained:

"The most rewarding part of developing this policy brief was the relationships we built leading up to and during the process, which have stood the test of time. It also opened doors to influential national stakeholder groups. In both these ways, it continues to bring us new opportunities to realise impacts from our research."

For me, this is a really powerful example of the relational approach to developing policy briefs I've described in this chapter. The priority of the team was on building long-term, two-way, trusting relationships through a series of meetings, which enabled them to co-produce the text. Whatever design ideas the team might have had were put aside, so that an existing, well-recognised design template could be used. This enabled the team to make the material as widely available as possible. After the policy brief was published, the research team was able to continue working closely with the members of the practitioner and policy community who had been involved in the seminar series to effect policy change.

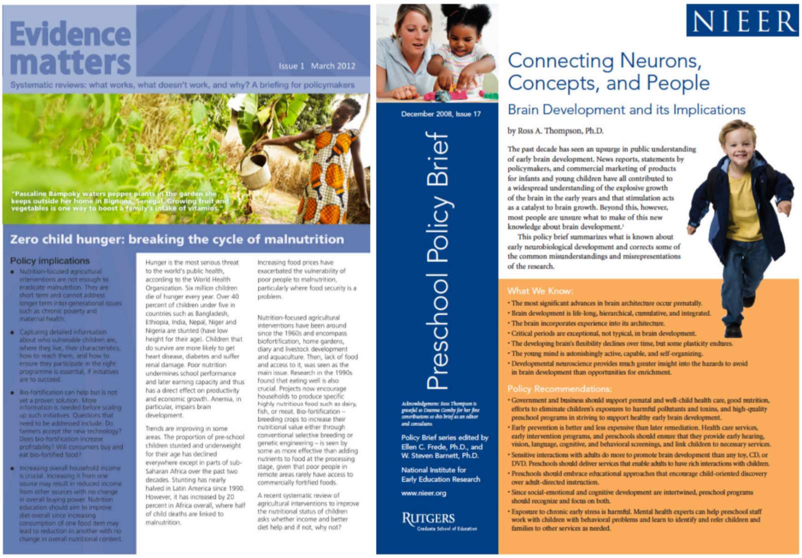

Figure 17: Examples of policy briefs from the Evidence Matters and NIEER series

The University of Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

NHS

CLAHRC BITE

A bite-sized summary of a piece of CLAHRC research

January 2013
BITE 20

While donepezil is currently recommended for patients with mild or moderate Alzheimer's, recent data indicates that donepezil gives cognitive and functional benefits for patients with moderate or severe disease.

Who this applies to:

Practitioners prescribing for patients with moderate-to-severe Alzheimer's disease.

Findings and implications...

- Cholinesterase inhibitors were effective for severe Alzheimer's disease .
- These findings are inconsistent with the literature on which NICE guidance was based (due to be updated in 2014) which recommends AChE inhibitors, such as donepezil, for mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease and memantine for severe disease.
- This study recommends treatment with cholinesterase inhibitor should be considered in the awareness of the increased risks of adverse outcomes including syncope, the need for permanent pacemakers and hip fractures.

The Bigger Picture

This multicentre study in England and Scotland (Howard, R. et al 2012) investigated the effectiveness of donepezil and memantine as patients' disease progressed. Patients who had moderate or severe Alzheimer's disease and were living in the community were recruited for the trial.

Participants were randomised to one of four groups; continuing on donepezil; discontinuing donepezil; memantine with donepezil; or memantine while donepezil was discontinued.

Patients in the group assigned to continue receiving donepezil showed significant benefit compared to the group who discontinued donepezil. The SMMSE indicated that on average cognitive function was better for the donepezil group (1.9 points, 95% confidence interval (CI) 1.3 to 2.5). The BADLS measure indicated lower impairment for the donepezil group (3.0 points (95% CI, 1.8 to 4.3) (P<0.001 for both comparisons).

Treatment with memantine in addition to donepezil did not yield significant differences.

Patients assigned to receive memantine showed significantly better outcomes in comparison to the group assigned to receive memantine placebo. Both primary outcomes show improvements; SMMSE was an average of 1.2 points higher (95% CI, 0.6 to 1.8; P<0.001) and BADLS was 1.5 points lower (95% CI, 0.3 to 2.8; P=0.02).

For the donepezil group, the average outcome differences were larger than the clinically important differences for the cognitive function measure (SMMSE, 1.4), however the difference in the measure of impairment was lower than the clinical important level (BADLS, 3.5). For the memantine group, while significant changes were observed in both cognitive function and impairment, neither of these reached a level of clinical importance.

The Evidence

Gill, S. S., et al 2009. "Syncope and its consequences in patients with dementia receiving cholinesterase inhibitors: a population-based cohort study." Archives of internal medicine 169(9): 867.

Howard, R., et al 2012. "Donepezil and memantine for moderate-to-severe Alzheimer's disease." New England journal of medicine 366(10): 893-903.

Kaduszkiewicz, H., et al 2005. "Cholinesterase inhibitors for patients with Alzheimer's disease: systematic review of randomised clinical trials." Bmj 331(7512): 321-27.

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence. 2011. "Donepezil, galantamine, rivastigmine and memantine for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease. NICE technology appraisal guidance 217."

An explanation of CLAHRC and its role

The Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRC) is a partnership between the University of Nottingham and the NHS in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire.

Funded by the National Institute for Health Research, our mission is to undertake high quality research to improve health and social care across the East Midlands.

This is a bite-sized summary of a piece of CLAHRC research. It is part of a series designed to make such work more available to clinicians.

Our website
www.clahrc-ndl.nihr.ac.uk

Useful link
www.alzheimers.org.uk

Contact us
tom.dening@nottingham.ac.uk

This is a summary of independent research funded by Medical Research Council and Alzheimer's Society

The views expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the NHS, the NIHR or the Department of Health.

Figure 18: Example of a CLAHRC BITE

LWEC
Living With Environmental Change

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The role of local government in improving air quality

There is an opportunity for a step change improvement in environment, human health, and quality of life but action is required at all levels of government including local authorities.

Living With Environmental Change Policy and Practice Notes

Note No.22
November 2015

The Living With Environmental Change Partnership brings together 22 public sector organisations that fund, carry out and use environmental research and observations. They include the UK research councils, government departments with environmental responsibilities, devolved administrations and government agencies. The private sector is represented by a Business Advisory Board.

Living With Environmental Change
The role of local government in improving air quality

Improving air quality in the UK, which could lead to enormous positive impacts on environment and health, requires further action at all levels, from town hall to Whitehall. Air pollution over the UK currently reduces life expectancy by an estimated six months, equivalent to 29,000 deaths per year. These health impacts are mainly related to pollution sources that are produced by human activity, such as motor vehicle emissions. Although they cannot solve all air quality problems, policy makers - particularly at local and regional government level - can influence air pollution impacts through traffic management and wider planning decisions, often with additional economic and health co-benefits.

What are the sources of air pollution in the UK?

Pollution comes from a variety of sources:

— Road transport is responsible for over 50% of air pollutants such as particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide in urban areas.
— Not all particulate matter from road transport is derived from fuel combustion; there are also non-exhaust sources (eg brake and tyre wear).
— Particulate matter is emitted from industrial combustion plants and public power generation, commercial and residential combustion, and processes such as construction and quarrying.
— To date, measures have concentrated predominantly on outdoor air quality. However, personalised monitoring, and indoor air quality modelling studies are now showing that pollution levels from indoor sources can form a significant part of exposure, meaning that we should also pay attention to indoor air quality.
— Indoor exposure is thought to be highest in more draughty buildings and in buildings with a large exposed external surface area, allowing for outdoor pollution to move indoors.
— Smaller, more airtight dwellings have lower levels of outdoor air pollution, but may suffer from higher levels of air pollution from other indoor sources.

What are the effects of air pollution?

Exposure to air pollutants can affect human health in a variety of ways, causing or exacerbating conditions such as respiratory illness (eg asthma), allergenic illnesses, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, adverse pregnancy and birth outcomes, and a lowering of male fertility.
In the UK:

— In 2008, more than one death in 20 was due to long-term exposure to air pollution. These deaths were premature, with an average loss of length of life of 11.5 years, and more than 340,000 life years lost.
— In 2011, the Environmental Audit Committee noted that the costs to UK society from poor air quality are on a par with those from smoking and obesity, at a cost of around £16 billion per annum.
— Nitrogen dioxide concentrations found in busy urban streets cause inflammation of the airways and long-term exposure can affect lung and respiratory function.
— Particles less than 10 micrometers in diameter (PM10) can be inhaled and accumulate in the respiratory system. Particles less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter (PM2.5) are referred to as "fine" particles and can pose the greatest health risks. Because of their small size (approximately 1/30th the average width of a human hair), fine particles can lodge deeply in the lungs.
— Small particles (including nano), which can be produced in excess by diesel engines, cause a range of negative health effects.

Policy and Practice Notes
Note No.22 November 2015

Who is affected?

Air pollution can have an impact on everyone. However:

— It is the most vulnerable people, older people and those with heart and respiratory conditions, who feel the effects most.
— Children are also vulnerable as their lungs are still developing and they breathe in greater volumes of (polluted) air per unit body weight.
— People living in deprived areas are more affected by poor air quality, in part because these areas are often near busy roads.
— People living in cities tend to be more seriously affected. Death rates as a result of particulate air pollution can vary from around 3% in rural areas to more than 8% in parts of London.

What additional benefits could tackling air quality bring?

Air quality can be addressed alongside:

— Encouraging people to increase physical activity to improve their health.
— Climate change mitigation.
— Limiting the impact of potentially damaging trade-offs in the future eg energy efficiency and indoor air quality in homes.

By tackling these challenges together we can keep overheads low and impacts high. For example, experts have highlighted that, given the health co-benefits that accrue from actions for a sustainable economy, tackling climate change could be the greatest global health opportunity of this century. It is also important that the benefits of interventions intended to improve air quality are maximised and any unintended negative effects (eg road injuries from increased use of bicycles) are minimised.

How can local authorities help in the shorter term?

Local authority decision makers can begin by:

— Implementing business engagement programmes (such as encouraging electric vehicle use, or using active transport) to reduce air pollution.
— Establishing and expanding council-run income-generating car clubs which can lead to a reduction in vehicle use through car sharing.
— Promoting zero emission "last mile" delivery of as many goods and services as possible with delivery to final destination by zero carbon vehicles.
— Organising "eco-driving" training for taxi-drivers to encourage more fuel-efficient driving practices.
— Leading by example in their own organization by introducing measures that reduce air pollution (eg car sharing, rewarding active travel, providing incentives for using public transport).
— Encouraging and, where practical, providing, more demand-responsive transport services to people living in urban and rural areas so that they can choose to travel sustainably.
— Ensuring housing is well insulated, and equipped with functioning extractor fans, and that occupants are aware of the need for ventilation during cooking or smoking.
— Encouraging home and flexible working to reduce the need for travel.
— Where possible, working with local Health and Wellbeing Boards to link air quality monitoring with an analysis of health impact, helping to join up national-level research and advice on air pollution with local government action.
— Communicating the positive narrative of tackling air quality and bringing benefits to individuals, health and the economy.
— Encouraging use of sensor technology by individuals to monitor air pollution levels themselves.

Living With Environmental Change
The role of local government in improving air quality

How can local authorities help in the longer term?

In the longer term local authorities need to be able to facilitate investment in changes with potentially greater impacts such as:

— Vertical roof exhausts for buses, and replacing diesel vehicles with zero emission alternatives when available.
— Ensuring that new buildings on their estate are air quality neutral.
— Working with developers and planners to ensure all developments within their area consider air quality and incorporate design features, mitigation or alternative provision to reduce or minimise emissions that may affect air quality or climate change.
— Encouraging people to make more journeys by bicycle or by foot, through integrated, harmonised and safe active transport networks.
— Where it is appropriate and cost effective, developing low emission or congestion charge zones.
— Ensuring real time air quality data is available to everyone in their catchment, to allow individuals to make a choice about where, when and how they travel. Access to this data should be facilitated to ensure it is fully understood and interpreted correctly.

Further information

This Policy and Practice Note was written by Dr David Hutchinson, Environment Facilitator, University of Portsmouth Environment Network. It draws on the Environmental Exposure and Health Initiative, co-funded by a partnership of RCUK funders and government departments: NERC, MRC, ESRC, DEFRA and DoH (Awesome and Traffic only). All funders are part of the LWEC network.

Useful resources:

Environmental Exposure and Health Initiative (EEHI) http://www.environmentandhealth.net/

EEHI projects:

AWESOME - Air pollution and Weather-related health impacts http://awesome.lshtm.ac.uk/

FABLE - From Airborne exposure to Biological Effects - Pathways for health impacts of nanoparticles http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/mds/projects/HaPS/IOEM/fable/index.aspx

TRAFFIC – Health impacts of air pollution and noise from traffic in London http://www.kcl.ac.uk/lsm/research/divisions/aes/research/ERG/research-projects/traffic/index.aspx

Atkinson R, Analitis A, Samoli E, Fuller G, Green D, Mudway I, Anderson HR, Kelly FJ. Short term exposure to traffic-related air pollution and daily mortality in London, UK Journal of Exposure Science and Environmental Epidemiology (in press) 2015 http://bit.ly/1jQOqoV

COMEAP The Mortality Effects of Long-Term Exposure to Particulate Air Pollution in the United Kingdom (2010) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/comeap-mortality-effects-of-long-term-exposure-to-particulate-air-pollution-in-the-uk

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Series coordinator: Jeremy Phillipson, Newcastle University

Figure 19: Examples policy brief from the Living With Environmental Change policy brief series (pages 1–4, clockwise from top right)

Finding attractively designed policy briefs is remarkably hard. However, the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) have a highly visual format to their policy brief series, which I love (Figure 17). Their briefs are full-colour throughout with background colours selected to match colours in the photographs that feature on each page. As you can see from the front page, policy recommendations are clearly identified and highlighted here, along with a summary of the literature on the topic (not just the narrow findings of one particular study). The Evidence Matters series is similarly colourful, featuring full-colour photographs on the front page (Figure 17). This series operates like a magazine, with monthly briefings on a specific issue. Having regular releases of new policy briefs helps raise the profile of a series, keeping copies regularly at the top of the pile on coffee tables in the offices of those you want to reach out to. The CLAHRC BITEs series is also colourful, featuring the National Health Service (NHS) logo which is widely recognised in the UK (Figure 18). It is a great example of what can be done with a short format. These bite-sized summaries of evidence are only two sides of A5 paper, but they convey the evidence concisely and powerfully.

In contrast to these, the Living With Environmental Change policy briefs (Figure 19) are monochrome green, but this was done for a clear reason, as Anne Liddon, the series editor, explained to me:

"We launched a similar series ten years ago with the research councils' Rural Economy Land Use programme (RELU) which had a slightly different focus. The RELU policy briefs were incredibly successful and we gained a reputation for providing timely and relevant research findings to Government and other stakeholders. We worked hard on the RELU brand, and the policy briefs were instantly recognisable as part of the programme. So when RELU ended and Living With Environmental Change wanted to launch a new series, we managed to merge the branding so the new series kept the same look and format. This meant policy-makers instantly recognised and trusted the new series as a reputable source of information that could inform their decisions."

One of the things that is interesting about this is the importance of brand reputation and recognition for policy briefs. You can just create your own design template and do your own thing. However, if you can find an existing policy brief series that has already built a relevant audience and has a strong reputation, your policy recommendations are more likely to be read and paid attention. If you are starting a new policy brief series, work on your brand and create something distinctive, attractive and instantly recognisable.

The now discontinued Living With Environmental Change series is a great example of what a good policy brief can look like, particularly on the inside pages. As series editor, Anne encouraged researchers to focus on specific key findings, rather than covering the whole research project, with a strong emphasis on the implications for policy. The front page has an image that tries to capture the content of the brief. In this example, it took a long time to find an image for air quality. The researcher wanted a positive image of air quality, so pictures of traffic and exhaust pipes were out. However, the researcher's suggestion of a landscape image did not seem obvious enough. Eventually, Anne sourced an image of a colleague's daughter running with a kite, and the search was over. On the inner pages, there is always plenty of white (or green) space around the text, no matter how much the researcher pleads to add more words. The introductory paragraph lays out the problem being addressed, and each heading is a question that Anne thinks the audience will want to ask. Finally, there is a box section with concrete action points for the audience and further information.

There are many more examples I could show you, but these four give you a flavour of the sort of thing that is possible. I've chosen them because they provide important lessons that illustrate and complement the suggestions I've made earlier in the chapter. However, take a look around for yourself at policy briefs, whether or not they are linked to your research area, and draw on the best ideas.